THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Currently there is no international convention under which a country can prevent another country from collecting information from space over its territory. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 provides for free access to space for all countries of the world for peaceful purposes. The Principles Related to Remote Sensing from Outer Space adopted by United Nations in 1986 also do not prohibit any country from making observations over other countries from space.

Stand on Nuclear Tests

1731. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether our diplomats in missions abroad did a good job of explaining to the world our position with respect to the nuclear tests;

(b) if so, the details of the work done in this area;

(c) what are the salient features of our stand taken by the missions abroad; and

(d) what more steps would be taken in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Diplomats in our missions all over the world have explained the rationale underlying Government's decision to conduct the nuclear tests, to government and non-government sources. They are also sending back regular feed-back regarding the responses, as well as monitoring reports and coverage in the media.

(c) The salient features of our stand has been to explain our legitimate security concerns underlying the decision to authorise these nuclear tests; our reaffirmation that we are a responsible member of the international community and that our policies are marked by a high degree of restraint; we do not intend to use these weapons for aggression as these are weapons of self defence; we have no intention to engage in an arms race and, that we remain committed to a speedy process of global nuclear disarmament.

(d) Government has sent special envoys to several fora and meetings to explain our stand on the issue. In this respect, Government intends to continue to actively engage various countries both at the official and non official levels.

G-15 Summit

1732. SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minsiter decided not to attend the G-15 Summit in Cairo; and

(b) if so, what was the main agenda of this Summit and the reasons for not attending the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI, VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The G-15 Summit held in Cairo from May 11--13, 1998 focussed on two major themes, viz., (a) Developments in international financial markets; and (b) Developments in the Multilateral Trading System and enhancement of intra-G-15 cooperation on trade and investment. The issues of terrorism, biopiracy and South-South Cooperation were also on the agenda. The hon'ble Prime Minister could not personally attend the Summit owing to other pressing engagements in India. However, the high-level Indian delegation was led by the Hon'ble Vice-President of India.